

11.06.07: Lt. Governor Touts Biotech Prep Programs in San Diego

SAN DIEGO - Lt. Governor John Garamendi, joined by Assemblymember Lori Saldaña and fellow members of the State's Commission for Economic Development (CED), today called for a renewed statewide effort aimed at boosting Career Technical Education programs, such as the Southern California Biotechnology Center program located at Miramar College, which prepares students for careers in San Diego's burgeoning biotechnology industry.

"Workforce development is the single most significant challenge faced by the biotechnology industry and other major employers in our state," said Garamendi. "For our State and its people to prosper in the decades ahead, we must find ways to meet this challenge head-on. With the bold set of objectives it adopted today, the Commission for Economic Development has taken the first step toward a stronger future for California."

Garamendi, as chair of the State's bipartisan Commission for Economic Development, has worked closely with Governor Schwarzenegger to reinvigorate the once defunct commission which will promote the development of a financially and environmentally sustainable growth economy for California. The CED will emphasize partnerships with business and higher education institutions to ensure that the state's workforce is ready and able to participate in careers of the future, generate high-value jobs, and stimulate private investment.

Biotechnology is a fast growing sector in the state's economy. For example, a 2006 survey of the biomedical industry conducted by the California Healthcare Institute and Pricewaterhouse Coopers indicated that the majority of biomedical firms plan to grow their operations in California over the next two years. A top reason cited by firms in deciding where to locate their facilities was the ability to find talent.

As an example of a successful workforce development program that can fulfill biotechnology industry demands, Garamendi and Saldaña pointed to the Southern California Biotechnology Center at Miramar College, which works closely with the biotechnology industry to serve the biotech workforce needs, and boost the economic growth potential of San Diego area biotech firms.

"The Southern California Biotechnology Center is committed to training the workforce of tomorrow," said Dr. Sandy Slivka, Director of the Southern California Biotechnology Center. "Through a variety of services provided by the center, including advancing science literacy and providing classes and workshops to train entry level, incumbent and transitional workers, our community colleges can meet the operational workforce needs of the biotechnology industry."

"With partnerships between community colleges, biotech firms and four-year institutions, the center is a model for cooperative workforce education," Assemblymember and CED Commissioner Lori Saldaña said. "It points to the future of technical education by coordinating educational opportunities and internships for those who want to enter the field and for those who want to sharpen their skills."

At today's meeting, the Commission established a Biotechnology Advisory Committee and appointed three initial members to advise the CED on biotechnology issues, including:

- Joseph Panetta, President/CEO of BIOCOM. Mr. Panetta is President and CEO and a member of the Board of Directors of BIOCOM, the regional association representing over 450 biotechnology, medical device, diagnostics, medical equipment and bioagriculture companies in the San Diego area, and the considerable number of service sector companies, civic organizations, municipalities, as well as the universities, colleges and biomedical research institutions in the San Diego region. As President and CEO, Mr. Panetta is responsible for executing on BIOCOM's mission of serving as a catalyst in positioning the San Diego biotechnology community to achieve global success working with a staff of 14 and a 52 member Board of Directors.
- Dr. David Gollaher, President/CEO of California Healthcare Institute. Dr. Gollaher joined CHI in 1993 as Director, moving to President and CEO a year later. Previously he was vice president of Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation, with responsibility for clinical operations, business development and managed care. Previously he served on the faculties of Harvard, UCSD and the Graduate School of Public Health at SDSU.
- Matthew M. Gardner. Mr. Garner is President of BayBio, the voice of the life science industry in Northern California, headquartered in South San Francisco. In total, BayBio serves the community of 900+ life science companies in Northern California, their 90,000 employees, and the supporting communities of suppliers, service firms and other stakeholders. Mr. Gardner oversees BayBio's activities in advocacy, industry advancement, membership benefits and communications.
- The CED also appointed new members to its aerospace advisory committee and agreed to consider establishing advisory committees focused on the agriculture and goods movement/international trade industries.

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